

A

# REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

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Thursday December 27. 1711.

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I have hitherto spoken chiefly to the surprizing Conduct of some People, on whom, and on whose Concern for their Safety and Protection, the Dissenters too much rely'd; and who, to Form a Party-interest, have given up both the said Dissenters and their Posterity: I leave it to the Issue, whether the Interest they have sought to Form by it, will Answer their End; if we may judge by the ordinary Dealings of Providence in the World, it shall not; and to make this out, we might look back to some Passages of Things in the World that have some Similitude to this.

In our late Unnatural Times, when Ci-

vil Wars Raged in our own Bowels — The Causes for, and Foundation upon which that War was begun, viz. The Parliament Resolving to preserve the Constitution, Invaded by Breach of, and Dispensing with Laws; even my Lord Clarendon himself, owns and acknowledges the Excess of the Court's Proceedings — In the Prosecuting this War, through the first 6 or 7 Years, Heaven seem'd to favour the Parliament in every Thing, and gave them a Surprizing Series of Success — But after they Rejected the Concessions of Peace made by the King from the Isle of WIGHT, which the Houses voted were a sufficient Ground of a Treaty;

Treaty; when, just as it is now, because they could have all, they would accept of nothing, it is to be observ'd, God never Prosper'd them—What ever Victories they got Abroad, Strife, Blood, Division, and at last Ruin, attended them.

Note, This was the first Time that I remember to have read of Treating by Preliminaries.

In a Modern Instance we have the King of S—n, in whom we hoped, as the Disciples said in another Case, *That this was he that should bane Redeemed Israel*; The Protestant Interest in Germany stretched out her Hands to him; the whole Confederacy turn'd their Eyes upon him; he held in his Hand the Scale of War and Peace; the Protestant Churches, long since Ruin'd in Poland, by the silent Voice of the Ashes of their Temples, call'd upon him, but he forsook them all; in Silesia he restor'd them but in part; as to the Confederacy, he scarce cast an Eye to it, but turn'd away to pursue his Muscovite Conquests; and as to Poland, he Sacrificed the Prospects of Restoring the Protestants there, to oblige the Popish Party, and Consented in the Postuлат of the New King he set up, to exclude the Protestant Religion out of Poland; I think the Parallel is not much unlike—What follow'd? He had never one Prosperous Step, or one Smile from Heaven after it, till he sunk under the Enemy he contemn'd, and was beaten in plain Battle by the Muscovites, whom he thought it impossible for him to be Conquer'd by; and the like I am Persuaded will follow here.

If this late Treatment of the Dissenters is successful to those that contriv'd it; if they Thrive in their publick Designs; if any Thing they do, I mean in the Affairs of the Publick, succeeds with them, then Heaven must A& something out of the usual Course and Method of his Providence.

But the Thing is past'd, *the Child is dead, as David said, Wherefore should we weep any more?* The Question seems to be now, What is next to be done? What are the Dif-

senter to do?—Why really the *Dissenters* have many Things to do; nor is it impossible to tell them how Good shall come to them out of all this Evil; would they apply themselves to such a Conduct, as might contribute to their own Interest; would they open their Eyes to their own Advantages—And would they learn to cease Espousing the Politick Interest of those, who can so readily Sacrifice their Religious to their Party—Would they Unite, act in Concert, be steady, be faithful to themselves, Support one another, Revive the publick Spirits their Fathers acted upon, and Encourage the few Conscientious Poor that are ameng them, that none may be Overcome by the Weight of Irresistible Poverty, to forsake them and their own Conscience—They might this Way add more Weight to their Interest, and give more Brightness to their general Character, than ever they had, since they acted in their late Divided and Party Capacity; *but of this hereafter.*

But to return to the Case in Hand—And speak a Word or two on one Hand to those Gentlemen, who are so Elevated at this Bill, and on the other Hand, to those who expect such mighty Events from the Conjunction of some few, with such of the High-Fliers as are against the present Management of Affairs; and let us Argue upon two Points with them.

1. Is it a Fair, an Honourable, or a Just Usage of the *Dissenters*?
2. Will it answer the End on either Hand?

1. Is it a fair, honourable Dealing with the *Dissenters*? And let me Expostulate in this Case a little: However ill the Practice of Occasional Conformity was in them, there is a manifest difference, betwixt Complaining that some do amiss, and taking from the whole, the Native Right that every Faithful Subject has to the Service of his Country: I have been as forward as any, to blame those *Dissenters* who Conformed merely to Qualifie themselves for a Civil Employment; but this is far from Arguing

guing, that because some do ill, and that *Evil is to themselves*, that therefore, those who do not so, must be barr'd from their common Rights: Nor am I alone in the Distinction between Conscientious and Hypocritical Conformity, tho' not stated, but Occasional; the Rev'd Mr. James Owen of Shrewsbury has this Distinction well treated, in his Book Entituled, *Moderation a Virtue*, in these Words. But before I proceed, I must premise, that I go not about to justify any that Conform merely for a Place, if there be any such; I take such Occasional Conformity, as I do also any Church-Man's Receiving the Lord's Supper, merely to Qualifie him for an Office, to be a Scandalous Practice, a Reaproach to Religion, and Offence to all Good Christians: But Occasional Conformity consider'd in itself cannot be so.

*Moderation a Virtue.* pag. 7.

A great difference lies then, between pressing or Arguing against, or Censuring Hypocritical Occasional Conformity, and Condemning all Conformity that is not stated, as Criminal to the State; even just as much difference, as there is between Persuasion and Persecution; If this be so, then, as I said before, what have the *Dissenters* done to Merit this Usage? Have they born no Share in the Weight, in the Misery, in the Blood, the Expence, and the Loss of this War? Have they no Fathers and Sons, Husbands and Brothers, lying in the Ditches of *Life*, and under the Counterscarps of *Death* and *Aire*? Have they paid no Taxes and Duties of Customs and Excises, to Support the War? Have they suffer'd no Losses in their Trade, their Ships, their Goods, their Estates, in the Depredations the Enemies have made on our Commerce and Colonies? Many of the poor Families who must lay

down the little Places, which long Importunity, and perhaps some Money has help'd them into, are the Miserable Remains of the Descents of the French at *Neu's* and St. *Christonbers*, of the taking our Colonies at *New-found-land*, of the Burning the *Turkey* Fleets, the Ravages of the *Privateers* upon an Unguarded Channel; nay, give the leave to say, many are the Ruin'd Masters and Owners of Ships let out to the Publick, for Transporting King *William's* Army, &c. to *Ireland*, who had no Provision made for them, till after they were Ruin'd by the delay; some are Victims to Parliamentary Deficiencies, some to Navy and Victualling Debts, or to put it in plainer English, to being long unpaid what the Government ow'd them.

And these are part of the People who are now in a Merciless manner to Perish without any Crime, and who, having first lost their Estates in the Service of the Government, must now lose their Employ under it, because they cannot be Hypocrites; — And I say this the rather, because it is apparent, none but such as cannot give up their Principles, will be Affected by this Law.

If this is an honorable Dealing, let our Enemies themselves be Judges; for my part, I have no Place to lose, no Expectation of any Place to give over; I neither have, seek to have, nor can accept of any Place upon the Terms that have been, any more than on the Terms that are now requir'd; tho' perhaps I have had as many Offers, and as much Family-Occasion as any Man; I cannot be Arguing therefore any part of my own Interest; — The Corruption of the Times makes it necessary to say this, let any Man equally indifferent Answer it if he can.

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